United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Agency Priority Goal | Action Plan | FY 24 – Q1

Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance

Goal Leader:

Shannon Green
Assistant to the Administrator
Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG)

Goal Overview

Goal Statement: USAID will seek to increase democratic demand in countries experiencing democratic openings through evidence-based, integrated approaches.

- Democratic Openings: By September 30, 2025, more effective USAID programming will contribute to a three percent increase in the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) liberal democracy index in target countries compared to counterfactuals.[1]
- Anti-Corruption: By September 30, 2025, more effective USAID programming will contribute to a three percent increase in World Justice Program Rule of Law Index Absence of Corruption in target countries.
- Evidence-Based Approach: By September 30, 2025, 2,000 users per month will access Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) evidence and learning resources through USAID platforms (DRGLinks, DRG LEAP).

Problem to Be Solved:

- Democracy is under tremendous stress globally. Complex and mutually compounding issues like climate change, debt, urbanization, and insecurity challenge the ability of all states to deliver on services that people care about. Where democracies are not consistently delivering outcomes in core areas of education, health, security, and livelihoods, support for democracy is eroding and creating opportunities for autocrats – only 58 percent of AmericasBarometer respondents support democracy as the best form of government, a historic low for the region.
- While the decline in some global democratic trends has been slowing, there is much to improve. The number of countries moving toward authoritarianism is more than double the number that is moving toward democracy, per the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IDEA's) Global State of Democracy Report.

What Success Looks Like:

USAID has been working to modernize its approaches to DRG assistance and to engage a whole-of-Agency integrated approach to supporting democratic openings, as demonstrated through the Partnerships for Democratic Development (PDD) and the Democracy Delivers Initiative.

- New policies, strategies, and evidence inform USAID programs in the DRG sector and other sectors to position USAID's support to maximize impact in priority countries.
- Countries where USAID is investing in supporting democratization behave differently than regional and comparative trends, providing a beacon of light to other countries and pulling up global trends.

[1] This is an ambitious and experimental indicator for which USAID will further define a methodology and baseline and targets during FY 2024 Q2.

Goal target(s)

	Achievement statement	Key indicator(s) A "key performance indicator" measures progress toward a goal target	Quantify progress					Frequency
	We will…	**Name of indicator**	**Start Value**	**As of (Date)**	**Target Value**	**Current value**	**As of (Date)**	**Update cycle**
1	Have 2000 users per month that access DRG evidence and learning resources through USAID platforms (DRGLinks, DRG LEAP)	Users of DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform (DRG LEAP) and DRGLinks	**340**	**09/30/23**	**2,000/m (updated January 2024, previous was 600/m)**	1,680	12/31/23	Quarterly
2	Have more effective USAID programming that will contribute to a three percent increase in the V-Dem liberal democracy index in target countries compared to counterfactuals.	Relative increase in V-Dem liberal democracy index in target countries compared to counterfactuals[1]	**0.083 (based on 2022 data)**	**CY22 data released March 2023**	**Baseline +3% Annually**	Will Update in Q3 (April 2024)	Q3 FY 2024	Annually
3	Have more effective USAID programming that will contribute to a three percent increase in World Justice Program Rule of Law Index Absence of Corruption in target countries.	Increase in World Justice Program Rule of Law Index Absence of Corruption in target countries	**0.382**	**10/25/23**	**Baseline +3% Annually**	0.382	10/25/23	Annually

[1] This is an ambitious and experimental indicator for which USAID will further define a methodology and baseline during FY 2024. The initial baseline methodology is described in slide 5.

Narrative – FY 2024, Quarter 1

Indicator #1: For FYs 2024 and 2025, USAID initially established a target of 600 users per month. In the first quarter of FY 2024, DRG LEAP and DRGLinks attracted a total of 5,041 users over three months, an average of 1,680 per month. Given the high initial interest driven by the launch of DRGLinks, DRG has revised the final target at the end of FY 2025 to 2,000 users/month, with incremental progression throughout FY 2024 and FY 2025. We will monitor continued site usage.

Launched at the end of September 2023, USAID's newest resource, DRGLinks, is an external online platform that curates and collates in one accessible location high-quality DRG technical resources and evidence, such as technical guides, evidence reviews, e-learning courses, and recordings of learning events. DRGLinks improves the DRG Bureau's support for strategic planning, project and activity design, and implementation across not only Missions and Bureaus but also donors, academics, and implementing partners. DRGLinks also links to USAID's DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform (LEAP) which hosts the following:

- **Data portraits** show quantitative and qualitative indicators for every country in which USAID operates and for every DRG Program Area.
- **Indicator inventories** show data and definitions for DRG indicators, both collected from third party sources (like V-Dem and World Justice Project) and from USAID programs.
- **Evidence maps** provide a visual depiction of the available research about each DRG Program Area across a range of interventions and outcomes. These resources help users incorporate research evidence into program design.
- **The technical approaches inventory** categorizes and details programmatic interventions commonly used by DRG programs. This resource helps users learn what types of interventions USAID has used to achieve specific development goals (e.g. strengthen civil society financial performance).
- **The learning harvest** is a collection of all DRG evaluations and assessments. This resource helps users find and learn from all assessments and evaluations of programs.
- **The survey repository** is a collection of DRG-related survey questions and survey data from international surveys. This resource helps users find and use citizen-level survey data about DRG topics, identify survey questions to include on DRG/Mission surveys, and track trends in survey data over time.

Narrative – FY 2024, Quarter 1 (Cont.)

Indicator #2: For this APG, USAID established a preliminary list of ten initial target countries that are experiencing democratic opening (see slide 10). These countries were based on an analysis of historical data from a variety of indicators including the V-DEM Liberal Democracy and Deliberative Democracy Indices, V-Dem Democratic Space Barometer (DSB), and BTI Transformation Index to identify countries experiencing democratic openings.

For the indicator ,"Relative increase in V-Dem liberal democracy index in target countries compared to counterfactuals," the counterfactual group needs to be established. Rather than comparing 'target countries now' to 'target countries then' as indicators often do (and as we do for Indicator #3), we are intentionally trying to measure the effect we have on those target countries by comparing change in target countries to change in the counterfactual group of non-target countries. The counterfactual group of non-target countries represents how the target countries would change if we did not target them with programs.

The process of selecting counterfactual non-target countries is not completely decided but will use quasi-experimental methods for causal inference, such as difference-in-differences or synthetic control. For the purpose of establishing a starting value, we used all non-target countries as the counterfactual group. The starting value is thus: [change in target countries from 2021-2022] - [change in non-target countries from 2021-2022]. In March 2024, we will select counterfactuals and update the starting value for the next quarterly update of the 2024-2025 APG.

Indicator #3: As in Indicator #2, this indicator also tracks the same ten target countries (slide 10) that are experiencing democratic openings. Those same countries' CY 2022 scores serve as a baseline for this APG. This indicator will be updated annually as data becomes available.

Narrative – FY 2024, Quarter 1 (Cont.)

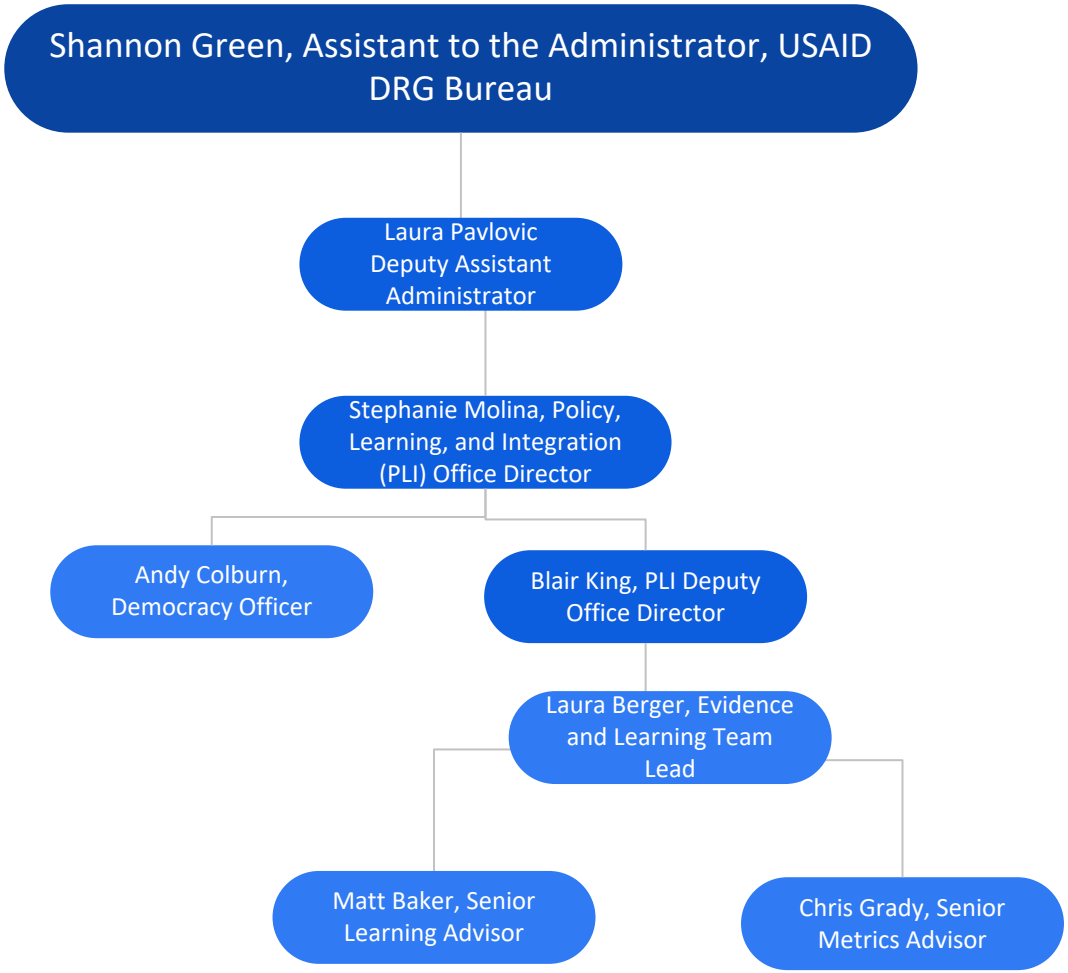
Milestone Progress:

USAID has also made considerable progress on key milestones including operationalizing the new DRG Bureau. The DRG Bureau was officially operational on September 12, 2023 and over the last quarter has made steady progress establishing the systems and policies necessary to become fully independent.

The DRG Policy was released first for internal comment on October 4, 2023 to garner input from a broad range of stakeholders across the Agency and inform a more nuanced and expansive approach to policy and programming. An informational webinar was held on October 12, 2023 to present the aims, scope, and purpose of the Policy. After the internal comment period closed on October 19, DRG responded to comments and then released the Policy for public comment on December 26, 2023.

USAID's DRGLinks website was completed in September 2023 and officially launched in November 2023. The initial interest in the site has led to the DRG Bureau to revise their targets for indicator #1 from 600 users per month to 2,000 users per month.

Goal Team


Shannon Green, Assistant to the Administrator, USAID DRG Bureau
Laura Pavlovic Deputy Assistant Administrator
Stephanie Molina, Policy, Learning, and Integration (PLI) Office Director
Andy Colburn, Democracy Officer
Blair King, PLI Deputy Office Director
Laura Berger, Evidence and Learning Team Lead
Matt Baker, Senior Learning Advisor
Chris Grady, Senior Metrics Advisor

Goal Strategies

USAID has grounded its strategies to achieve this DRG goal by acknowledging that it must renew its approach to promoting democracy by:

- Updating conceptual and programmatic approaches;
- Being willing to challenge its assumptions about where and how it works;
- Striving relentlessly to use high quality evidence and data when designing and adapting programs; and
- Committing to reward democratic reform by combining both rapid response resources and longer-term, cross-sectoral aid to support democratic openings and transitions so emerging democratic leaders and movements can succeed.

These actions will maximize USAID's contribution to the vital task of preventing further democratic decline and fostering a new wave of democratic commitment, consolidation, and confidence.

While the fate of democracy will not hinge on USAID's DRG portfolio alone, USAID recognizes it must renew the tools, approaches, and urgency of its work to be maximally effective and help usher in change toward a more just, accountable, inclusive, and participatory future for all. Goal strategies include:

- **Update DRG conceptual and programmatic approaches to reflect new programmatic challenges and opportunities:** USAID is finalizing a new Agency-level DRG Policy to address emerging issues, such as the rise of disinformation, digital authoritarianism, entrenched and sophisticated corruption networks, locally-led approaches, and to recognize that the greatest contests for democracy occur across the spectrum of issues and sectors USAID programming addresses. To increase impact and sharpen USAID's democratic development approaches to effectively engage with its contemporary context, USAID will renew sector norms, priorities, and approaches by implementing its global policy and strategy ecosystem, which includes the new Rule of Law Policy and the new Anti-Corruption Policy.

Goal Strategies (Cont.)

- **Increase support to democratic openings:** The most vulnerable time for any democracy is immediately after transition. It is critical that USAID is able to surge DRG resources and staffing support to democratic openings when they occur. To show that democracies can deliver in these environments, it is critical for USAID to use an integrated, cross-sectoral approach to help democratic reformers deliver wins and consolidate support for a democratic trajectory. Because democratic breakthroughs are inherently unpredictable, this requires flexibility**,** multi-year commitment, the ability to work across development sectors, and a growing rapid response capability for the DRG Bureau, DRG technical teams within each of USAID's regional Bureaus, and Missions. Efforts like the PDD and the Democracy Delivers Initiative represent this integrated, cross-sectoral approach to supporting democratic openings.

- **Promote evidence-based and data-driven DRG programming:** Democracy assistance work has a statistically significant positive effect over time. USAID should recalibrate this work to meet today's challenges by increasing grounding in research and learning at the headquarters and Mission levels. USAID Operating Units should use high-quality measures of democratic change, such as V-Dem data and USAID's DRG Country Data Portraits, together with evidence reviews and research findings from the DRG Learning Agenda and gap map efforts, to inform strategic planning, designing activities, and managing and adapting performance. The DRG Bureau is investing in increasing these resources through its new DRGLinks platform and is working to increase use by increasing engagement with Missions.

USAID Priority Countries for this DRG APG

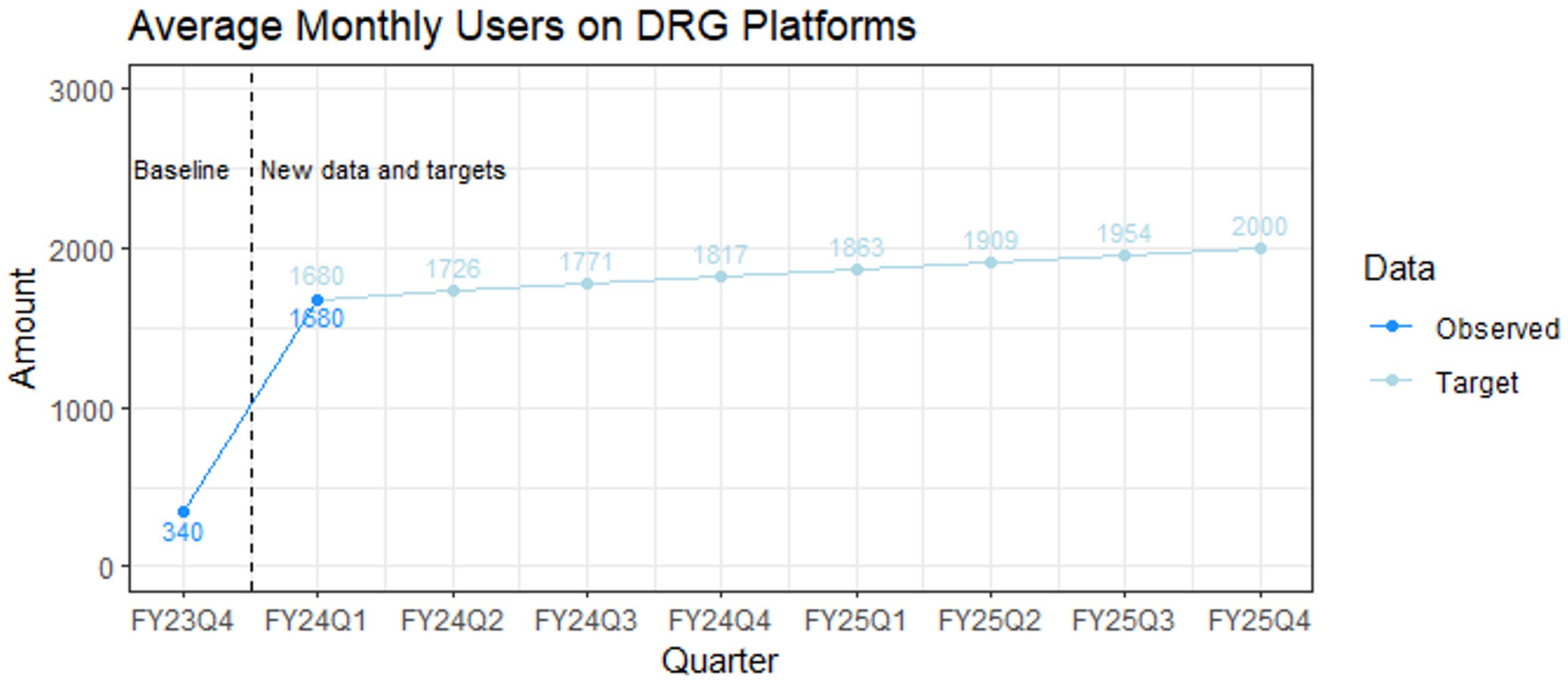
Region	Target Countries
Africa (AFR)	Malawi
	Tanzania
	Zambia
Asia (ASIA)	Nepal
Europe & Eurasia (E&E)	Moldova
	North Macedonia
Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC)	Dominican Republic
	Ecuador
	Honduras
	Paraguay

USAID used historical data from a variety of indicators including the V-DEM Liberal Democracy and Deliberative Democracy Indices, V-Dem Democratic Space Barometer (DSB) and BTI Transformation Index to identify countries experiencing democratic openings. Continuing to track these indices to ensure consistent data collection methodologies.

Key Quarterly Indicator

Indicator #1: Users of DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform (LEAP) and DRGLinks

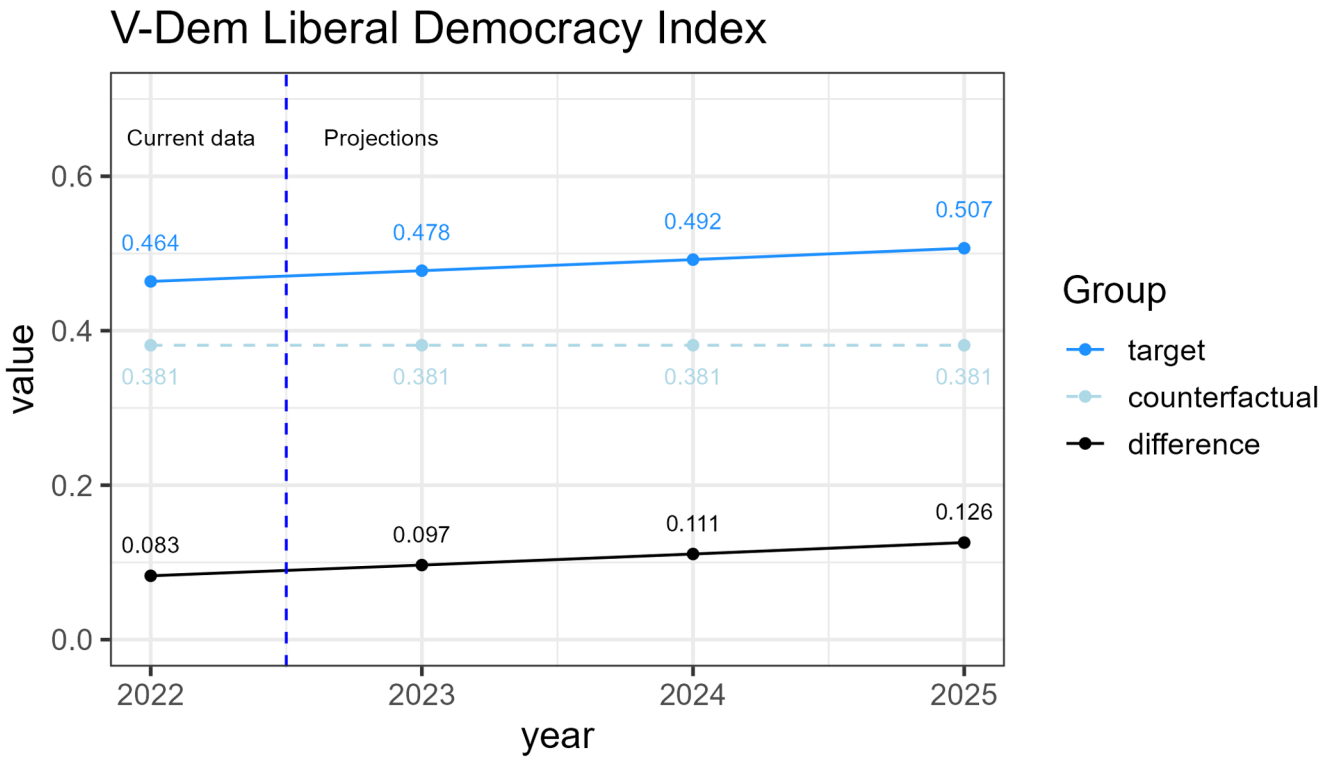
- USAID updates these data quarterly.
- This graph shows our targets for the FY 2024- 2025 APG and our observed data. The observed data includes our baseline value from FY 2023 Q4. Based on our strong FY 2024 Q1, we increased the target values.



Key Annual Indicators

Indicator #2: Relative increase in V-Dem liberal democracy index in target countries compared to counterfactual

- V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both electoral and liberal aspects of democracy. The Electoral Component Index (ECI) captures the quality of elections, individual rights, and media, as well as freedom of association. The Liberal Component Index (LCI) captures the checks and balances on the executive, respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the independence of the legislature and the judiciary.
- This graph shows (1) our projections for **target** countries, (2) our projections for **counterfactual** countries, and (3) the **difference** between the target countries and the control countries. The indicator is about increasing the difference between target and control countries (#3), and we include the other values to contextualize that difference.

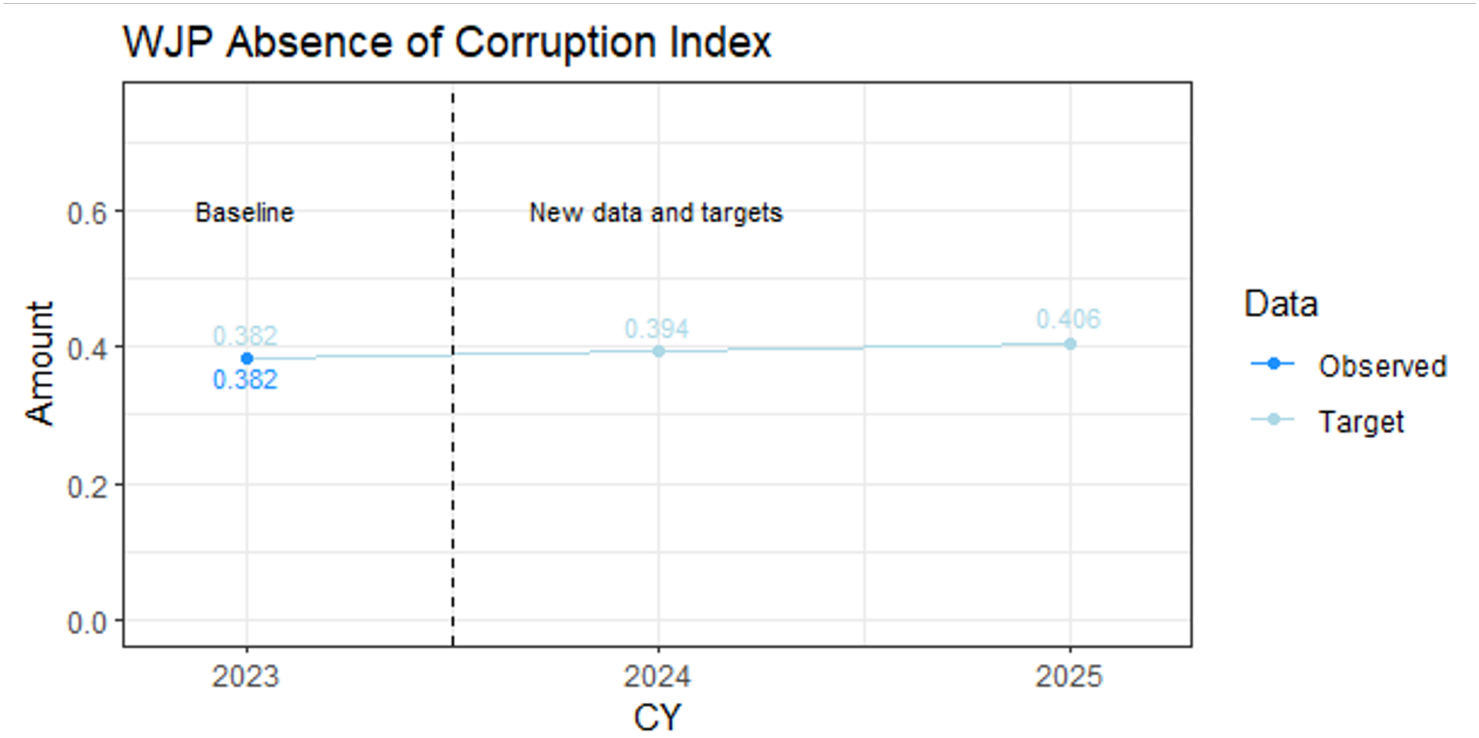


[4] V-Dem releases data in March for the previous calendar year. USAID will report progress against this V-Dem indicator in April 2024.

Key Annual Indicator

Indicator #3: Increase in World Justice Program Rule of Law Index Absence of Corruption in target countries

- This indicator measures the absence of corruption in government. The factor considers three forms of corruption: bribery, improper influence by public or private interests, and misappropriation of public funds or other resources. These three forms of corruption are examined with respect to government officers in the executive branch, the judiciary, the military, police, and the legislature.
- This graph shows our targets (light blue) for the FY 2024- 2025 APG and our observed data (dark blue). It begins with CY 2023, released in October 2023, which is our baseline value.



WJP releases their in October for the current calendar year. This indicator will be updated again in December 2024.

Key Milestones

Milestone Summary

Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Change from last quarter	Owner	Comments
Distribute DRG Policy for public comment	Q1 FY 2024	completed			Public comment period closes Jan. 22, 2024.
DRG Bureau fully operationalized	Q1 FY 2024	completed			Bureau officially operational on September 12, 2023.
Finalize DRG Bureau Congressional engagement strategy	Q1 FY 2024	delayed		DRG/Program Office	We've learned about Hill priorities across the Bureau and have begun shaping the long term engagement plan.
Finalize DRG Bureau integration strategy	Q3 FY 2024	on track		DRG/Office of Policy Learning and Integration(PLI)	
Launch DRGLinks	Q1 FY 2024	completed		DRG/PLI	DRGLinks was operational on September 13, 2023 and launched in November 2023.
Every DRG Program Area page on DRGLinks is up and running	Q1 FY 2025	on track		DRG/PLI	Pages have been established for 12 Program Areas. DRG continues to add content.
Evidence-to-Action workshop in each region	Q3 FY 2025	on track		DRG/PLI	DRG/PLI/Evidence and Learning (E&L) is finalizing an extended training curriculum which will launch in June 2024 in Ghana. Previous pilots were conducted in Colombia and Washington, DC.
Conduct 'Thinking and Working Politically' clinics for at least five Missions	Q2 FY 2025	on track		DRG/PLI	

Key Milestones (Cont.)

Milestone Summary

Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Change from last quarter	Owner	Comments
Baseline of USAID strategy docs with integrated Anti-Corruption approaches	Q1 FY 2024	delayed		DRG/ACC	Anti-Corruption Center (ACC) developed an approach to forming a baseline and a list of resources to review. In the next quarter, we will review and build the baseline.
Identify Partnerships for Democratic Development (PDD) country key development challenges	Q1 FY 2024	on track	+3 countries	DRG/PLI/GI	Nepal, Timor Leste and Paraguay completed Problem Finding.
Sign PDD agreements	Q2 FY 2024	on going		DRG/PLI/GI	Global Initiatives (GI) TeamI will consult with PDD Missions to clarify and update “Agreements” requirement in Q2.
Develop PDD Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning plans	Q2 FY 2024	On track		DRG/PLI/GI	GI will consult with PDD Missions in Q2.

Data Accuracy & Reliability

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is a new approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy. V-Dem provides a multidimensional and disaggregated dataset that reflects the complexity of the concept of democracy as a system of rule that goes beyond the simple presence of elections. The V-Dem project distinguishes between five high-level principles of democracy—electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian—and collects data to measure these principles. V-Dem is a team of more than 50 social scientists on six continents. They work with more than 3,500 country experts and a global International Advisory Board. V-Dem has more information about its work on its website.

The Liberal Democracy Index examines the following questions: To what extent is the ideal of liberal democracy achieved? It emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The index includes measures of constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account, since credible elections are the core of democracy.

Data Accuracy & Reliability (Cont.)

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide. WJP produces original, independent research and data about the rule of law, including the WJP Rule of Law Index; promotes understanding and appreciation for the rule of law, its relationship to development, and effective strategies to strengthen it; and connects and builds an engaged global network of policymakers and advocates to advance the rule of law through strategic partnerships, convenings, coordinated advocacy, and support for locally-led initiatives. WJP has more information about its work on its website.

Absence of Corruption indicator from the WJP Rule of Law Index measures the absence of corruption in government. The indicator considers three forms of corruption: bribery, improper influence by public or private interests, and misappropriation of public funds or other resources. These three forms of corruption are examined with respect to government officers in the executive branch, the judiciary, the military, police, and the legislature. The indicator includes measures of: (2.1) Government officials in the executive branch do not use public office for private gain, (2.2) Government officials in the judicial branch do not use public office for private gain, (2.3) Government officials in the police and military do not use public office for private gain, (2.4) Government officials in the legislative branch do not use public office for private gain.